

BEING EARNEST

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Cecily. Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious!
Sometimes ^{he} is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

Miss Prism. [*Drawing herself up.*] Your guardian enjoys ^{the} best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is especially ^{to} be commended in one so comparatively young as ^{he} is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

Cecily. I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored ^{when} we three are together.

Miss Prism. Cecily I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and ^{triviality} would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about ^{re-} that unfortunate young man, his brother.

Cecily. I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We ^{might} have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure ^{you} certainly would. You know German, and geology, and ^{things} of that kind influence a man very much.

Miss Prism. [*Cecily begins to write in her diary. Shaking her head.*] I do not think that ^{even} I could produce any effect on a character that according ^{to} his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and ^{vacillating.} Indeed I ~~am~~ not sure that I would desire to reclaim ^{him.} I am not in favour of this modern mania for turning ^{bad} people into good people at a moment's notice. As ^a man sows so let him reap. You must put away your diary, *Cecily.* I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

Cecily. I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful ^{secrets} of my life. If I didn't write them down, I should probably forget all about them.

Miss Prism. Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that ^{we} all carry about with us.

Cecily. Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that ^{have} never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the ^{three-} volume novels that Mudie sends us.

Miss Prism. Do not speak slightingly of the ^{novel,} three-volume Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

Cecily. Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully ^{clever} you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like ^{novels} that end happily. They depress me so much.

Miss Prism. The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.